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This insistence upon the rational, the simple, the real throughout the book makes it refreshing and wholesome reading. It serves as a balance to the finely-spun, psychological type of investigation that characterizes much of our study of aesthetics. The clear and pleasing style of the writer, illuminated by his clever comparisons, has not a little to do with his success and is a confirmation of his thesis that artistic form is an important asset in the exposition of any subject.

Fern Rusk Shapley.

**The Nature of Landscape.** By Samuel Latta Kingan.  
8°, 101 pp., 14 pls. Chicago, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1920.

“Feeling, fancy, and spirit” runs the title of the principal chapter, and with these three words Kingan’s book is described. For in this sketchy essay on *The Nature of Landscape* both message and medium are as intangible, as elusive as are the ideas represented by these words, which the author tosses about like a juggler keeping three balls in the air. The expression of moods rather than the concise exposition of a theory of landscape painting seems to be the purpose of the book. No fault need be found with such a purpose. The pity is that in part, at least, the author falls just short of its attainment. For when a mental state becomes so vague that its comprehension lies beyond all human powers, it can hardly be called a mood; it is madness.

Two exaggerations, it seems to me, are responsible for what there is of failure in a book like this. First, there is the abuse of intuition, feeling, emotion. When any writer or artist shuts himself up in the tower of emotion, he cuts himself off from communication not only with the rest of the world, but with a large part of himself as well. We can hardly organize our ideas, or even feelings and emotions, without the use of intellect. When our author says: “The artistic imagination has its origin in feeling, and bursts from it as lightning from clouds” or, “Squirm as we may, there is no denying, that our proud intellect, with all its reasons why and causes for, occupies a narrower demesne than its humbler relations [that is, feeling, fancy,

and spirit], and only learns by hearsay, vague and uncertain, of the out-region where they so freely roam," we are prepared for vagueness and uncertainty in the formulation of his own thought. We readily sympathize with him when he says: "The purer the emotion, the more removed from the sway of reason, the less is the consciousness of definite shape or form."

The second exaggeration lies in the abuse of the interchangeableness of the arts. "Nor is landscape, as has been indicated, confined to color and line. The very feel of a noble and powerful picture may be conveyed by words or music. Pictorial form is not of the essence, but only one of the methods of expression. If we may conceive of an artist ambidextrous with pen, brush, and musical instrument, the mood produced by writing, picture or melody, of the same subject, would be similar." Kingan's contention here is partly just. One art may express in a certain measure what is expressed by another art; but that measure depends upon a combination of psychological conditions too complicated to enter into here. Suffice it to say that when literature attempts to usurp the place of painting, it must still wear a literary dress. The impression that we get from reading Kingan's book is that he wishes to produce in his writing some such effect as Monet produces in his painting of the Houses of Parliament seen through the mist. Apparently in the hope of obtaining the vague, indefinite quality of the atmosphere, Kingan employs vague, abstract words, loosely thrown together without regard for sentence structure or intelligible punctuation. He fails to realize that the effect of such painting as Monet's is obtained precisely by complete subservience to the laws of formal composition and color harmony, and that there is no vagueness or indefiniteness in the mind of the painter as to what he wishes to express or how he intends to express it.

Kingan does come down to earth occasionally and make some suggestive observations. He does not always keep up his glorification of emotion and feeling. In his more sober moments he recognizes the primacy of the real: "But we see the intangible only through

the tangible, the invisible only by means of the visible. Without the real there can be no imagination, and our vision of the real, not merely colors, but enters the structure of the imaginative. We must begin at the beginning, and that is the common ground of form, known to men." He can even go so far in his support of the real that the commonplace, earthly members of his audience must call a halt and intercede for imagination. He says, for example, that "Classic trees and Greek marbles, have not changed mankind's conception of trees, or the human form. . . . The common conception will always prevail, the dead level of fact, known and accepted, and it is not art's business to change it, but to adopt it as a base." Leaving aside the question of the business of art, it is patent that art has changed and is continually changing the common conception of objects. Having once lived among the landscape paintings of Corot and Monet, of Inness and Murphy, we can no longer see a tree as we once saw it, or as our neighbor who has never known the paintings sees it.

Intellect, too, Kingan unexpectedly admits into the sanctuary of the arts: "The approach is two-fold, emotional and intellectual. I cannot conceive of an intellectual art, but only of an intellectual display of it. The divination, the bloom, the cleaving joy, are substantive and purely emotional; the control and the portrayal, are operative and largely intellectual." Invariably, however, he considers emotion more important than intellect. Furthermore, the relative position of the two is the basis of his rating of the arts. He associates intellect with line and its functions, emotion with color and value. Thus he concludes that "As the arts progress, as they abandon the staidness and rigidity of the intellect, and cling to the warmer, if more erratic emotions, from architecture to sculpture, and thence to painting, poetry and music, line is subjected and color placed in the ascendant."

By picking up suggestions scattered here and there through the book, we can get an idea, none too clear, to be sure, of the author's theory of the purpose of art. The purpose of art is not the mere satisfaction of laws of

formal composition; it is not the literal transcription of nature; it is not attainment of beauty for its own sake. It is the interpretation of man and his passions: "The painter of figure is not concerned with anatomy as such; he is not a chemist, nor a surgeon. He paints passions, not bodies. It is for the landscape painter, not merely to render nature with whatever intimacy and power he may attain, but above all else, to depict and expose, to interpret and translate man." The purpose of art is the furtherance through beauty of something already of value, and that value is, apparently, measured hedonistically: "The art that does not further something already of value is worthless. . . . Better a work, mediocre in beauty and in truth, on an important subject, than a work great in beauty and in truth—if this may be—on a trivial one." "Beauty is always of, or belonging to, something else, never of itself alone." "Beauty and truth came into the world, not separate and apart and of themselves, but to make more pleasurable all pleasure-giving things."

The book could have been greatly improved by more careful revision before publication. A little criticism would have led the author to put his ideas into more intelligible form and to avoid the vagueness and looseness in his abundant lofty descriptions so that their poetic beauty could have been more fully realized.

Fern Rusk Shapley.